DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 034 478 HE 001 200

AUTHOR Hodgkinson, Harold
TITLE Student Participation in Campus Governance.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Berkeley. Center for Research and Development in Higher Education.
PUB DATE 8 Feb 69
NOTE 6p.; Based partially on the American Association for Higher Education's Campus Governance Project

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Organization, *Administrator Attitudes, Decision Making, *Governance, *Higher Education, *Student Characteristics, Student College Relationship, *Student Participation, Teaching Quality, University Administration

ABSTRACT

The concept underlying the research discussed in this paper is that governance has to do with the perceptions of campus problems held by different groups and the perceptions of those who are knowledgeable and influential in dealing with these problems. Data were collected from over 3,000 persons on 19 selected campuses, and more than 900 interviews were held with students, faculty, administrators, department chairmen, and trustees. At some institutions, the administration and faculty favored student participation on the ground that better decisions would result, while at others students were placed on major committees merely to "take the heat off." Administrators at some institutions asserted that students should have absolutely no say in the governance of the institution, while some at others gave students more responsibility than they were willing to accept. In most situations, student participation in governance has worked well, but problems that they face include the inflexibility of some administrative structures the lack of information on budgetary and other fiscal matters, and the diversity of student bodies for whom no one student representative can speak. However, data show that students are more concerned about the quality of teaching than are faculty or administrators, and because of this reason they are needed to improve the quality of university decision-making. (WM)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

AERA Conference
Los Angeles, Cali
February 8, 1969

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Harold Hodgkinson
CRDHE, Berkeley

ED034478

Student Participation in Campus Governance*

There is an interesting historical debate on the relative virtues of the wisdom of the young versus the old. The Roman Senate stands at one extreme (Senectus, the root, meaning aged or elderly) with the Benedictine order on the other, favoring the counsel of youth over that of age:

> Chapter 3. Of Calling the Brethren to Council. As often as any important business has to be done in the monastery, let the abbot call together the whole community and himself set forth the matter. And, having heard the counsel of the bretheren, let him think it over by himself and then do what he shall judge to be the most expedient. Now the reason why we have said that all should be called to counsel is that God often reveals what is better to the younger. . . But if the business to be done in the interests of the monastery be of lesser importance, let him use the advice of the seniors only. It is written: Do all things with counsel, and thy deeds shall not bring thee repentence.[1]

The relative virtues are clear -- the elders know precedent, the results of past attempts, while the young can see past the limit of precendent into the area of culture as it might be. In any effective governing structure, both are necessary. Today, the arguments about student participation are becoming increasingly academic, in the worst sense of that term. The logical case against any form of student participation seems to be getting more and more difficult,[2] a large number of campuses are now instituting student membership on major campus committees, and also, it seems clear that if students are not let into the formal governance structures, they simply govern the institution from outside. It seems unlikely that the issue will go away, and desirable that every institution give some thought to the problem of how and where student participation might be useful. In the AAHE Campus Governance Project,[3] we found a great deal of variety in the patterns of student participation, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Our approach to research on governance suggested that governance has to do with the perception of campus problems held by different groups, and the perceptions of those who were knowledgable and influential in dealing with these problems. We used a simple one page questionnaire, with responses from over 3,000 persons on our 19 selected campuses. (The selection of "representative campuses for research purposes is a headache we might talk about later.) From the questionnaire analysis, we were armed with the perceptionsof problems held by campus groups, as well as nominations of those considered knowledgable

* Based partially on data from the AAHE Campus Governance Project.

HE 001 220

and/or influential in dealing with these problems. Our interviewing time could therefore be used very effectively in that we already knew who most of the leaders were, and could concentrate on how they worked. (Many of the knowledgables and influentials were not in the formal hierarchy, as you might expect.) We conducted over 900 interviews of students, faculty, administrators, department chairmen, and a few trustees. Each interview ran over an hour, some as long as three hours. We are currently writing up some of the analyses of the interview data, and hope to have the final report completed by this fall.

Our study had several methodological aspects which may interest you. First of all, rather than making an either-or decision on questionnaire versus interviews, we decided to use both, and then compare as carefully as possible the two types of data. We are just beginning to understand why the data are congruent in some cases, and incompatible in others. We can discuss this later if you wish. Suffice it to say, there are cases in which questionnaire analysis reveals certain problem areas, yet the interview data from the same campus contains no reference to this problem.

Another interesting aspect of our interviewing work was that we had two students on each team of 5-8 interviewers. Our student interviewers proved to be invaluable sources of information on aspects of campus life which the rest of us could not have acquired. (Those who believe in student participation may even have to extend the notion to research activity.)

There were some institutions in which the administration and faculty favored student participation on the ground that better decisions would result, institutions in which students were placed on major committees to "take the heat off," and because the committees never did much anyway, and institutions in which the administration asserted that students should have absolutely no say in the governance of the institution, with faculty agreeing with the administration when talking with the administration, and sympathizing with the students when talking to them. On several campuses, the administration was more willing to give responsibility to students than they were willing to accept. It was clear that the "mickey mouse" type of student government, in which the best minds in the student body are convened to discuss such weighty matters as the color of the homecoming dance programs, are on the way out. There seems to be a cultural lag problem on several campuses, as the upgrading of the student body has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in respect for the ability and responsibility of students. Brighter students are, by and large, harder to lead around by the nose,

yet several of the more patriarchal institutions seemed to be trying to do just this.

The two last areas in which student participation develops on most campuses would seem to be faculty promotion and retention, and changes in the curriculum. It is perhaps on these two areas of control that student and faculty groups frequently part company, the faculty feeling that these are matters in which only the faculty can speak with authority, and the students being somewhat unsure of themselves. In addition to the areas which relate directly to student life, such as dorms and food service, there are over 100 campuses which now have student membership on all-campus long-range planning committees (along with faculty, administration, and sometimes trustees), and on central campus boards established to deal with problems of communication and coordination. These are variously referred to as campus senates, advisory boards, Community Councils, Policy Committees, etc. *

In most situations familiar to the writer, student participation has worked well. The students generally have done their homework, come to meetings prepared, etc. There are, of course, highly visible exceptions, just as among faculty, but on the campuses which have used student participation for two or more years, the results seem quite positive. A number of campuses have even worked out ways in which student representatives can meet with trustees to discuss views, although very few institutions have students as voting members on the board. It should perhaps be pointed out that student representation on campus-wide committees should not be looked upon as a panacea for the solution of problems of campus unrest. Several institutions which had done the most to encourage student leadership were also dealing with problems of student dissidents. Generally, campuses should adopt the student participant model because they believe in its effectiveness in decision-making, not because it will cool down student militants. (In fact, the reverse can occasionally be true.)

One of the major reasons for including students in governance involves the fact that on most campuses, governance has become a factionalized process, whereby loyalty to the group (faculty, students) has increased and loyalty to the institution (and particularly to the president as the major spokesman for the institution) has declined. Factions are more interested in those aspects of governance which affect themselves than they are in those which affect the institution as a whole. Thus, if a campus is to be run on the factionalist, adversary model, then

Nate

*The writer is directing the Institutions in Transition Project for the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Higher Education. This project will yield information on how mnay such campus-wide bodies now exist. Completion date is June, 1969.

student self-interest is just as viable as that of faculty or administrators. Differences by campus groups in the area of resource allocation is seen in Table I -- students rank student parking as number one and faculty sabbatical leave fourteenth, while faculty see office space as number one and sabbatical as second. On Table II, dealing with the relative importance of a number of educational qualities, it is interesting to note that teaching ability, ranked most important by students, is seen as seventh in importance by faculty and administrators. (It also would appear from this table that students are far less troubled by the problem of liberal vs. professional education than the faculty seem to be.) To the extent that the various patterns of self-interest seen in these two tables form a supplementary system, one could argue that the "mix" might be a good one. But whether representatives of one group can understand the needs and interests of the others is a more difficult issue.

Student participation is clearly no panacea. Students will have to deal with highly resistant structures designed to impede change. As one of our respondents put it: "The tactic used against potentially controversial enthusiasm is very effective. As soon as something gets off the ground it is required to be crystallized into an approved structure. By the time this is done it will have lost its steam." The best student leadership, like the best faculty or administrative leadership, can easily become trapped in the mire of a structure like this.

Another major problem with student participation involves the release of budgetary and other fiscal material to students on major committees. There is a tendency on the part of some administrators to avoid giving information on fiscal matters to faculty, and they, of course, are even more unhappy at the prospect of giving the same information to students. There are several examples of committees of students and faculty which cannot perform their function, as the requisite financial information has not been supplied. Fiscal information and its handling are a major source of conflict on several of our 19 campuses.

There is also the fact that in most campus governance structures, there is an adult pattern of social interaction which strongly follows the governance pattern -- the department chairmen see each other at coffee or cocktails, etc. It is difficult to integrate students into this informal governance structure, which often is just as important as the formal committee meetings. These informal sources of information, from wives to secretaries, are hard for the student to tap into. There are, of course, informal student information sources, but on some campuses they are not as accurate as those used by adults. They are, at

least, different, and informal information is not always available through both the student and "adult" channels in similar form.

On large campuses, the student body forms such a vast divergence of backgrounds, interests, and points of view that it is virtually impossible for a student representative to speak for the student body. In fact, there seems to be an increase in the appeal of direct participation of all concerned in decision-making, rather than the representative model in which one votes for someone who may think the same way the voter does. The representative model seems to be losing favor with campus adults also, as one over-thirty respondent described his campus: "The Senate doesn't really represent the faculty, the President doesn't really represent the College, the Board doesn't really represent the people." The Berkeley Senate has before it a motion to the effect that the state-wide Academic Senate is a useful communications device, but it cannot be said to speak for the Berkeley faculty. So we may be pulling student representatives into a system at a time when it is highly unlikely that their participation will draw much loyalty from their followers. In fact, some student respondents have told us that it is virtually impossible for them to play a leadership role as part of the formal structure, as "leader" to many students today means someone who works outside of the established organization. A person elected from a fraternity constituency, for example, will have a difficult time on some campuses just because the fraternities have been useful as communication links for administrators. Only a minority of our 19 campuses had a student body homogeneous enough so that it could be united behind any kind of student leadership.

What the future may hold in terms of campus governance is difficult to project. Some fairly massive retaliatory legislation may well come to pass in the next few years, making the role of responsible student leadership even more difficult. But it is clear that by driving bright, responsible student leadership outside of the formal structure, we may be creating a self-fulfilling prophecy which no one wants. The point is not that we need to coopt them, the point is that we need them to improve the quality of campus decision-making, for one very important reason -- our data show that students are more concerned about the quality of teaching than are faculty or administrators.

Notes:

1. The Rule of St. Benedict, Westminster, Md, 1925, p. 25.
2. H. Hodgkinson, "Students and an Intellectual Community," Educational Record, 49 (fall, 1968).
3. The interview portion of the study is given a first treatment in H. Hodgkinson, "Governance and Factions -- Who Decides Who Decides?" Research Reporter, CRDHE, Berkeley, vol. 3, No. 3, 1968.